

# Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

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## News

Check this envelope for the special Boise River Festival postal cancellation. The Postal Service has a kiosk with a special cancellation for each of the four days of the River Festival, and on Thursday the kiosk is only open after 4 p.m. A rarity in your own hands!

By this time most of you should have decided whether or not you are going to meet the group in Wallace on July 23 and 24. If you are a "no" or have not yet decided, now is the time to (re)consider. It is guaranteed to be fun, you will see and hear some interesting things, and may even add some items to your collection. Make your reservations at the Best Western Wallace Inn (800-N-IDA-FUN), meet the group there for dinner Friday evening, enjoy trading and conversation afterwards, then we will take some trips around the area on Saturday and conclude our visit that night.

## As north as Idaho gets

In recognition of our upcoming meeting in Wallace, this issue will feature token stories from northern Idaho. There are four possibilities for the northernmost Idaho town from which tokens are known, but three of them are really the same place due to a name change and an error on the part of a token maker.

The old Hudson's Bay Company trail leading from Bonners Ferry north to Fort Steel, British Columbia followed the Kootenai River across the United States - Canada border. The trail was later known as the Wild Horse trail after the 1863 discovery of the Wild Horse gold mining area in British Columbia. In the spring of 1893 the United States government established a port of entry at the border, prior to that time the customs office and immigrant inspectors were located at Bonners Ferry. Chosen to be the Inspector of Customs at this new post was Major Joseph I. Barnes.

Barnes was born in Lewis County, New York in 1839, and moved with his family to Ohio, and Michigan before settling in Neenah, Wisconsin where grew into manhood. In 1861 he volunteered for service in the Civil War, enlisting in the Twenty-First Wisconsin Infantry as a Private. He later served in an engineering battalion, achieving the rank of Major by the end of the war. After his discharge in 1865 he settled in Brown County, South Dakota, marrying Mary C. Jaquith in 1867.



Active in the Republican Party, in 1892 Barnes received an appointment from President Benjamin Harrison to be Immigration Inspector at Kansas City, Missouri. From there he transferred to Bonners Ferry, Idaho where he continued his political interests, becoming chairman of the Idaho League of Republican Clubs. In 1893 he moved to a post as Inspector and Collector of Customs at the Canadian border. Barnes gave the post the name Ockonook, a Kootenai Indian word meaning a grassy hillside place with rocky outcroppings

overlooking water. When Democrat Grover Cleveland defeated Harrison for the Presidency in 1893, Barnes lost his appointment and the customs job. Liking the prospects in the Kootenai Valley, he opened a general merchandise store and secured the appointment as the first Postmaster of Ockonook.



The only known token from Ockonook was probably part of a 5¢ - \$1.00 set. It is the 27mm aluminum 50¢ piece, and probably dates from the later part of the 1893 - 1898 period.

J. I. B. / OCKONOOK / IDAHO. // GOOD FOR / 50¢ / IN TRADE

The name of the post office was changed to Porthill in 1896, back to Ockonook in 1897, and finally back to Porthill in 1900. The name Porthill was derived from the Port of Entry and Deputy Collector of Customs, Charles P. "Chippy" Hill. Hill had located a mineral claim whereon the townsite was laid out. J. I. Barnes always liked Ockonook, so he continued using it in his business name. Major Barnes became ill in May, 1898, but did not consider it serious. He went to Spokane in October of that year for medical treatment, returning home much improved after spending two weeks in a Spokane hospital. In December, he traveled to Rathdrum, the Kootenai County seat, to attend to a District Court lawsuit over possession of some land he had. With him went a number of witnesses on his behalf, including Richard A. Fry, an early pioneer of the region, had established a trading post at Bonners Ferry in 1876, had purchased the ferry at the site from Edwin L. Bonner and ran it for 16 years, and ran a stage line and pack train between Walla Walla, Washington and the Wild Horse mines before retiring in 1892. Unfortunately while at Rathdrum, Barnes' illness took a downward turn. Then, to make matters worse, on December 14, 1898, his good friend Richard Fry died suddenly. On December 20, Major Barnes also passed away at the Wright Hotel, leaving his wife and a 23-year old son [who also worked in the store].



Mrs. Mary C. Barnes operated the Ockonook General Store and post office after her husband died. After the December, 1899 completion of the Kootenai Valley Railroad from Bonners Ferry to Kuskonook, British Columbia, Porthill experienced somewhat of a boom. H. A. French bought an interest in the Ockonook store and assisted Mrs. Barnes with its operation until some time after 1903 when he took complete control. He was also justice of the peace.

I am aware of three other token-issuing businesses in Porthill. Charles Bliss is listed in the 1929 Dun & Bradstreet directory as clothing and pool. This unusual combination is another example of the way many early business owners made ends meet. The more ways they could use to get customers into the business, the more sales they could make. There are two round, aluminum varieties of Charles Bliss tokens, a 19mm 5¢ and a 24mm 25¢ one. I know of only one example of each.



Edward Jones is listed in the 1918 Bradstreet directory as cigars, confectionery, etc. His 21 mm brass token is the "common" Porthill token with 8 examples known to me. It has also been found with the same keyhole-shaped cutout seen on several of the Bonners Ferry tokens. This hole was put in the token long after it was made, probably by one of the Bonners Ferry pool halls.



A. P. Whitney opened a hotel and saloon in Porthill in 1897. He ran the Whitney Hotel through at least 1903. George V. Whitney was listed in the 1914 Bradstreet directory as hotel and confectionery, however I suspect the middle initial of this listing is erroneous. The 1903 *Illustrated History of*

*North Idaho* biography for George B. Whitney indicates that his father [name not listed due to a typo in the text] was a hotel keeper in Porthill and George B. was a farmer and stockman in the Copeland area. I presume that George B. Whitney took over the hotel in Porthill from his father between 1903 and 1914. Additionally, the 1985 *History of Boundary County* quotes area resident Nellie Ruckey, "There were two hotels with a bar and a dining room in each. They were owned by



Jim English and Bealy Whitney." There is only one example of the Whitney token known to me, a 25mm aluminum piece.

Last, but not least, is the error token issued by Samuel J. Miller, saloon keeper in 1900-01. His token reads SAM MILLER / POST / HILL / IDAHO. // GOOD FOR / 12 1/2¢ / IN TRADE. The name of the town was poorly communicated to the die maker, resulting in a town name that never existed. I know of only one of these 24mm brass pieces.

The other candidate for "Northernmost Idaho town" is Eastport. This town is another Port of Entry, but it is east of Porthill, hence the name. Eastport is on the Moyie River, which forms the line between British Columbia and Alberta. A post office was established there in 1906 with the building of the Spokane International Railroad that met the Canadian Pacific there.

There is only one example of a token known to me from Eastport. It is a 30mm brass token: LARSON & TAYLOR / EASTPORT / IDA. // GOOD FOR / 5¢ / IN TRADE. They were listed in the 1921 Dun & Bradstreet directory as confectionery, etc.

### **F. A. Blackwell and the Blackwell Lumber Company**

From the *Coeur d'Alene Evening Press* of Saturday, December 9, 1922: "Last evening at 8 o'clock at his home on Sherman avenue, F. A. Blackwell peacefully passed away after an illness of five weeks. F. A. Blackwell, one of the leading figures in the development and upbuilding of this section of the northwest, was born in Fairfield, Maine, December 23, 1852, the son of Nathaniel Russell and Sarah H. Blackwell. He gained his education in the public schools of Fairfield, the Bloomfield Academy at Skowhegan, Maine, and a commercial college at Augusta. At the age of 11 years he left home and worked as a farm hand for his board in the winter seasons, attending school through the cold months. In 1869

he made his way to the woods of Pennsylvania, where he learned the lumber business. He was employed there until 1871 when he obtained a position at the freight station of the Pennsylvania Railroad at St. Marys, spending his time there and at Driftwood until 1880, acting as assistant to the agent and having charge of the freight business.

"In 1880 he became a contractor and logger on the west branch of the Susquehanna river, remaining there until 1900. In May of 1900 he came to the Coeur d'Alene country and began buying timber, but he did not consider this part of his country his home until two years later. In 1906 he organized the Panhandle Lumber Company of Spirit Lake, operating mills at Spirit Lake and Lone, Washington. He was president of the Panhandle Lumber Company from the date of its formation until 1916.

"In 1908 he became one of the organizers of the Blackwell Lumber Company of Coeur d'Alene and Fernwood. Until recently Mr. Blackwell has acted as manager of the Fernwood plant, and has been a member of the board of directors of both the Coeur d'Alene and the Fernwood companies.

"He was one of the organizers of, and has been president of both the Bank of Spirit Lake and the American Trust Company of Coeur d'Alene. He was the builder of the Coeur d'Alene & Spokane Railroad, now the Spokane & Inland Empire Railway. He organized the company, raised all the money and voted 85 percent of the stock.

"Mr. Blackwell also was the builder of the Idaho, Washington & Northern Railroad, now a part of the Milwaukee system, which is said to be the finest-built railroad in the west. He was president of this road at the time of its construction.

"In 1876, at Renovo, Pennsylvania, Mr. Blackwell was married to Miss Isabel F. Bell, who was born in Holton, Maine, a daughter of Jonathan Bell, who was engaged in the lumber business. Two children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell. The son, Russell F. is president of the Blackwell motor Company of Spokane. The daughter, Helen Blanche, born August 10, 1883, died March 14, 1917. She was the wife of R. M. Hart, who was the manager, secretary and treasurer of the Blackwell Lumber Company."

This newspaper obituary was largely taken from Hawley's 1920 **History of Idaho**. Frank A. Blackwell was truly one of northern Idaho's industry giants. In addition to the above-named companies, he was involved in many other ventures, most of which were profitable. Clarence Strong and Clyde Webb's history of logging in northern Idaho, **White Pine: King of Many Waters**, makes mention of Blackwell and his companies in many places. It is a great book to read if you have an interest in this facet of Idaho's past.

Fernwood is located on the St. Maries River in the southeast corner of Benewah County. Boone's **Idaho Place Names** says "This community was founded by a Mr. Fenn, who applied in 1901 for a post office to be named Fennwood. The post office was granted, but the postal authorities misread the name as Fernwood and that name remains." Strong and Webb say "The Blackwell Lumber Company at Fernwood plant, operating under the same general management a its parent company, the Blackwell Lumber Company at Coeur d'Alene, was capable of cutting in the big mill class, but available records indicate cutting in excess of 20 million feet in only one year, 1929, when the plant was reported to have produced 29 million feet. Production in some years was less than 10 million feet, but for most years the mill produced between 10 and 20 million feet annually. Total lumber production is estimated at 175 million board feet. The plant at Fernwood ran steadily from the time it first sawed in May, 1913, through 1924. It was idle during the years 1925 - 1927 inclusive. Then it operated

from 1928 to 1930 and was idle thereafter until the company closed the Coeur d'Alene and Fernwood plants in 1937."

There is only one denomination of token from the Blackwell Lumber Company known to date, a 21mm brass 5¢ piece. Blackwell could have had a "company store" at Fernwood that used tokens as advances against the wages of the workers. Since Fernwood was rather small and remote, and might not have supported a general store, this would be logical. I think, however, that since there is only one denomination known, that this was probably not the case. More likely was that the lumber company had a recreation center in the living complex for the workers where these tokens were used in conjunction with games of cards or pool. The company would not want its employees gambling for money on the premises, so the common ruse of betting with "Good For" tokens would allow the sheriff to say no gambling was going on. This token is known in at least 10 examples, and I estimate that its usage was in the latter part of the life of the Fernwood plant, 1928 - 1930.



### **Sherman E. Bohon**

One of the Wallace newspapers, the **Weekly Press-Times**, reported in its March 14, 1913 issue the apparent suicide of Sherman E. Bohon, saloon owner at 520 Cedar Street. In the same issue was the report that Bohon had pled guilty on two of three gambling charges that had been brought against him recently, and that a \$200 fine had been levied against him.

"Driven to despondency by financial trouble, S. E. Bohon, proprietor of the Family Liquor Store, committed suicide yesterday morning. A full hour before the death is supposed to have occurred, he made a special trip home, presented his two little boys with presents and kissed his wife and five children good-bye. Though this did not arouse immediate suspicion it is now believed by the family to have been a farewell trip made with full knowledge of his intentions.

"According to the man's friends and those most intimately acquainted with his business, he has not made money of late and monthly has seen his obligations grow greater. Added to these he was recently fined \$200 on a gambling charge. This apparently was the last straw and convinced him that his efforts to get clear was a big task. For a number of days he is said to have shown nervousness, but it was not until yesterday morning that he showed signs of a preoccupied condition of mind.

"He went to his store at 8 o'clock yesterday morning and at first on entering appeared to recognize none of those then at the bar. It was only when addressed for the second time that he spoke. During the hour between 8 o'clock and 9, he tended to the business while his employees went to their breakfasts. Immediately after their return he made up his bank deposit as was his morning custom. From the bank he went almost directly home. He spent but a short time there but made the time an occasion for presenting his next oldest boy a watch and for promising the older of the sons the one he wore. 'Charlie, you can have this watch.' He said, as he made the first gift. Then turning to the older, he said, 'Sherman, you are to have my watch when I die.' On his departure he kissed each of the children and the wife, as was his custom. He then went at once to the store of George Gilmore, where he purchased a revolver.

"'Have you got a good gun, Gilmore?' was his remark. 'I've got one good one in the window there.' The proprietor replied. This one which was purchased, was a 38 special Smith & Wesson. With it in his hands, Bohon asked, 'Have you any cartridges which will fit in this?' 'I

haven't a full box, but I have got a few.' Gilmore replied. These few were added to the purchase. The price was fixed at \$8. Six of this was paid and two promised.

"From the pawn shop Bohon went at once to his place of business. He went into his office, took off his rubbers and then went through and out the back door. This was the last seen of him. It was not till suspicion, created by the man's prolonged absence, led to an investigation, that the act was discovered. Jesse Freeman and Chris Traxell, who had become somewhat alarmed, started the search which led to the discovery of the body in a brick store house immediately in the rear of the saloon. This was shortly after 2 o'clock. The body had apparently been lifeless a number of hours.

"Knowing that the man had been worried, Freeman became somewhat alarmed near noon. When near 2 o'clock he returned from lunch, the search was decided upon. He remembered that when the proprietor had left the house he had heard the iron door to the brick store room in the rear close. He had presumed at the time that the man had merely pushed them together to clear the passageway leading to the alley. The thought at this late hour was that possibly the missing man had gone into the store house. The search of the first floor was unsuccessful. When they reached the second floor, they at once discovered the lifeless body. It was resting against a box, the head laid back over the top. Apparently the man had gone into the room, sat down on the floor, removed his hat, which was found on an adjoining box, and then placed the revolver to his forehead.

"Bohon was 44 years old and is survived by a wife, four small children and a step daughter, aged 15, all of Wallace. In addition he has two sisters, one a resident of Oscola, Mo., his birthplace, and the other a resident of a Kansas town. He came to this district nearly 12 years ago. For a number of years following that he was a miner employed in the mines at Mace. He came to Wallace to open his present business in 1906. It was while at Mace that he married. He was a member of the Elks and the Miners' union. He leaves collectable insurance of \$3,500."

In about 1976 I saw a liquor jug at a flea market: FREEMAN & BOHON / FAMILY LIQUOR STORE / WALLACE, IDAHO. (I wish I had bought it - anyone seen it?) The 1908 Bradstreet directory shows Freeman & Bohon - saloon, so it appears that the Jesse Freeman who is mentioned above was a partner, at least for a while around 1908. Later Bohon is listed alone as saloon proprietor. There are three token varieties known from the business:

FAMILY LIQUOR STORE / WALLACE, / IDA. / S. E. BOHON, PROP. // GOOD FOR / 50¢ / IN MERCHANDISE 31mm rd bi (4 known, some counterstamped GW or GM on reverse)

S. E. BOHON / ESTATE // GOOD FOR / 5¢ / IN TRADE 21mm rd al (2 known)

SEB // 5 21mm rd br (1 known)

Best regards,

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